

The Ten
Commandments

8th
Commandment

TEACHER GUIDE

Luther
House
Confirmation
Curriculum



You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

Essential Question: Why would God be concerned with your reputation?

How is trust the basis over every relationship we have?

Students will be able to:

- Describe what a reputation is and why God would be concerned about yours.
- Identify how we harm others and their reputations by what we say (and tweet, post, etc.).
- Explain how trust is the basis of every relationship.
- Connect the ways we tear down our neighbors with our failure to fear, love, and trust God as we should.
- Give examples of ways to protect your neighbor's reputation and relationships.
- Hear the good news of Christ's forgiveness that sets you free from defending your own reputation and tearing down your neighbor's reputation.

Lesson Overview: As we've learned, God is the one who gives you everything you are and everything that you have, including your body, family, and property. But we have, as Martin Luther put it "one more treasure that is indispensable to us." That treasure is your honor and reputation. Your reputation—your good name—also matters to God. So does your neighbor's reputation. So do your classmates' reputations. So does your teacher's reputation. Relationships are based on trust. So when we undermine the reputation of another person by tearing them down—by gossiping or spreading rumors, even if they're true—we're spreading the seeds that destroy relationships. God gives freely. We don't trust Him. So we tear down our neighbors.

1. Opening Prayer



Merciful God, you have created us to be in relationship with You and with one another. Guard us and our neighbors from the harm we would cause to each other's reputations and honor. Cause us to fear and love you so that we would come to each other's defense and speak well of one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

2. Essential Vocabulary



 **For Teachers: Words matter! Here are a few that you can explore briefly with your students:**

Bear witness: to give a statement or testimony of what happened

Reputation: what other people believe about you and expect from you; your “good name”

Betray: to hand over to an enemy, especially by means of deception

Slander: to make a false, damaging statement about someone

Gossip: spreading rumors (whether true or not), especially about the private or personal matters of others

3. Video Lesson: Sixth Commandment




This video offers some words about what the Eighth Commandment is all about.

There will be a “knowledge check” question after the video.

- When is it ok to gossip or lie?
 - Someone started a rumor about you - to make things even, you start a rumor about them
 - Explaining why your homework was late.
 - **It is never ok to lie or gossip.**

4. SING BOLDLY: Hymn Connection




 ***There is a video that explores a hymn that can be sung during worship, and how the hymn connects to what we believe. The students will learn how this ties into the subject of our lesson, some background of the hymn, and the video will even teach us how to sing it boldly!***

Teachers: At this point in the lesson, there will be an option to skip ahead to the “**Memory Work and Wrap Up**” portion. Alternatively, you may lead your group through all or part of “**Here I Hear & Speak**”. This section will equip you to lead group discussion and achieve the lesson’s learning goals. We advise that you explore this option with your small group (or as an individual). This guide has been created primarily to help you as you facilitate the “Hear I Hear & Speak” section. You will be learning about this part of Martin Luther’s Small Catechism, how it comes out of God’s Word in Scripture, and even how to equip our learners how to give that Word to others.


5. HERE I HEAR & SPEAK: Discussions and Activities




Group Activity: JUDGING: GOOD OR BAD? Do you like being judged by other people? That depends, doesn’t it? If you entered a piece of art in a competition and won first prize, you might really like being judged. On the other hand, if someone made a negative comment about you based on how you were dressed, you probably wouldn’t like that at all—it would feel really awful. As the video said, trials come in many forms. **What are some other situations in which we will be judged by others in ways that might be positive or negative?**

 **TEACHER NOTE:** Encourage students to come up with examples such as a test at school, a sports contest, or a courtroom trial. In each of these, there is a judgment taking place that may be positive or negative.

DISCUSS: Whenever you’re being judged by others, your reputation is at stake. Your reputation is a matter of what other people believe about you and expect from you. When they expect that you’ll do what you say, they can trust you. All of our relationships are based on trust. What makes a relationship “good” or “bad” is a matter of trust (or lack of it). **How well would your friendship work if you couldn’t trust your friend? How well would a marriage work if you couldn’t trust your spouse to do what they said? Why?**

 **TEACHER NOTE:** Keep coming back to the truth that relationships are all based on trust. It is when our trust is violated that relationships tend to fall apart.


The old saying goes, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” **Is this really true? What effect could the words you say about someone else have on their reputation? What effect could this have on their relationships?**

 **TEACHER NOTE:** When you spread a rumor or say things that damage someone’s reputation, it will also hurt the person’s ability to be trusted. So it will have a negative effect on relationships.


You may have heard people say, “It’s not gossip if it’s the truth.” **Do you think that’s right?** Rumors spread about the personal matters of others, whether they’re true or not, are gossip. And gossiping comes at the expense of others’ reputations. God is concerned about our reputations and relationships, so He gives us the Eighth Commandment: You shall not bear

false witness against your neighbor. This commandment prohibits gossiping and lying because God knows these things damage trust and destroy relationships.

We can spread gossip and lies by speaking, but we also communicate in many other ways. **Consider how people’s reputations can be damaged on social media. What would the Eighth Commandment have to say about the ways we use social media?**

 **TEACHER NOTE:** The Eighth Commandment definitely applies to social media. Because social media gives its users a level of anonymity, people can be particularly nasty there. This commandment requires us to speak well of others, and social media is not an exception!

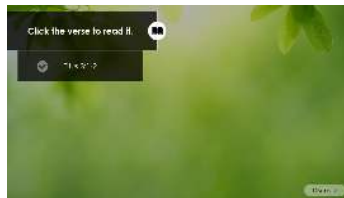
This commandment means that when your neighbor’s reputation is attacked, you should defend your neighbor and interpret everything they do in the best possible light. Say you heard a friend spreading a rumor about someone from school that you don’t get along with. **What would you do? What does the commandment require you to do?**

 **TEACHER NOTE:** We don’t like it, but the commandment says that we should come to the person’s defense. We also recognize that defending someone else may put our own reputations at risk.


How might our fears about our own reputations prevent us from defending others? How do the ways we tear down (or fail to defend) our neighbors’ reputations reveal that we do not trust God as we should?




In the Word: Let’s see how Scripture passages relate to what we’ve discussed so far!




- Read: Titus 3:1-2
- Discuss: In the Bible, something is evil because it is a lie—it opposes God’s Word. The devil is called “the evil one” and also “the father of all lies.” With that in mind, what does it mean “to speak evil of no one”?

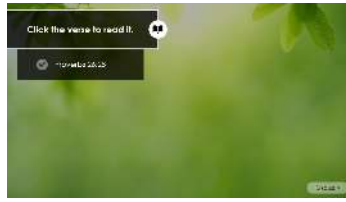
 **TEACHER NOTE:** This means we should not tell lies about others. In other words, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

- St. Paul also says here to “avoid quarreling, be gentle, and show perfect courtesy toward all people.” How is this related to defending your neighbor and speaking well of him or her?

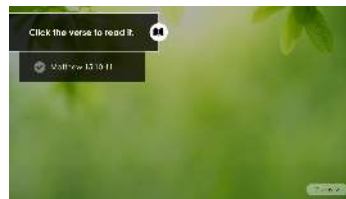
 **TEACHER NOTE:** This is really just another way of saying the same thing. We are to bear in mind that the things we say affect the reputations of others (and ourselves).

- Does “all people” leave room for any exceptions? Why or why not?

 **TEACHER NOTE:** No. The Commandment does not leave room for exceptions. We will not find righteousness for ourselves by looking for exceptions in the law.



- Read: Proverbs 26:28
- How does a lying tongue *hate* its victims?
- A flattering tongue tells people whatever they want to hear. Is there any difference between a flattering tongue and a lying tongue? Why or why not?

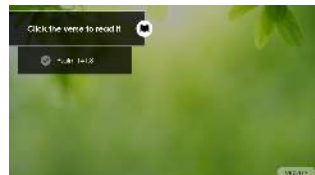


- Read: Matthew 15:10-11
- To defile something is to make it unclean. What does Jesus say defiles a person?


 **TEACHER NOTE:** Jesus says, “What comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.”

- How is this related to the Eighth Commandment?

 **TEACHER NOTE:** The words we say reveal the sin that is in our hearts.




- Read: Psalm 141:3
- This is a prayer. Why would David ask the Lord to set a guard over his mouth?

 **TEACHER NOTE:** David realizes that what comes from his own heart and out of his mouth is not good. The psalm teaches us to turn to God for mercy when the things that come from our own hearts and mouths are revealed as sin.



- Read Matthew 18:15-20
- How do verses 15-17 show us God’s concern for protecting our reputations?

 **TEACHER NOTE:** Jesus says to go and tell your brother his fault, between you and him alone. This is not a public matter. Your brother’s reputation matters to God.

- In verses 18-20, Jesus is giving the Office of the Keys. Remember that the Office of the Keys is the authority Jesus gives to the Church to bind and forgive sin. **Could you become righteous by avoiding gossip?** No. It is true that your neighbors need you not to lie and gossip about them, but avoiding these things can't take your sin away. So how does God deal with your sin? He sent His Son Jesus to take your sin, suffer the cross and death, and be raised to forgive your sin. And when Jesus gives you a promise, there is no doubt that He will keep it. He is trustworthy. So with His promise, He takes away your fear. In Baptism, Jesus Christ not only forgives you but gives you the authority to forgive others in His name!

6. MEMORY WORK



The words in Luther's Small Catechism are worth memorizing. In this lesson, there could be tools, including songs, that will equip students to find some success.

- *The Eighth Commandment.* You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
- *What does this mean?* We are to fear and love God so that we do not betray, slander, or lie about our neighbor, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain his actions in the kindest way.

7. LEARNING CHECK



- What other people believe about you and expect from you is your _____.
 - righteousness.
 - **reputation.**
 - identity.
 - slander.



- Which options are correct?
 - **God is concerned about your reputation (and your neighbor's reputation, too).**
 - Having a good reputation is what makes you righteous.
 - **Your reputation affects whether or not people will trust you.**
 - **God created you to be in relationship with Him and other people.**



- The most important factor in any relationship is _____.
 - having lots of shared interests
 - **trust**
 - having fun
 - always saying what the other person wants to hear

- True or **False**: It's only gossip if it's a lie.



- True or **False**: The words we say can't really affect other people's reputations and relationships.



- **True** or False: The Eighth Commandment even applies to the ways we use social media.



- **True** or False: The Eighth Commandment requires you to defend and speak well of others, even if it puts your own reputation at risk.



- We often don't defend or speak well of our neighbors because we don't trust _____ as we should.
 - our own reputations.
 - **God.**
 - ourselves.



- What will actually set you free from having to worry about your own reputation?
 - **Hearing Christ's promise of the forgiveness of sin for you.**
 - Always keeping quiet if you don't have anything nice to say.
 - Saying the things people want to hear, whether they are true or not.

8. WRAP UP

Closing Prayer & Benediction



- Lord God, we give You thanks that You have given us a tongue and the ability to speak. Forgive us when we gossip and tell lies about our neighbors and hurt their reputations; and cause us instead to trust You and use our words for each other's good, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen.

It is good practice to give a blessing to each individual student before they leave you! (You might also select one of them to give this spoken benediction to you.) Our Lord uses baptized believers to give this, God's message, to one another. Here is a Benediction that you could use this week:

Almighty God, who cannot lie, gives His Word of forgiveness to you, (Name). Amen.



Luther House
of Study